



A Message From The Secretary

The legislative session is winding down and over the next few weeks lawmakers will be on break prior to the Omnibus Session that starts April 22. During this time we will plan for the final portion of the session and review what remains to be accomplished. KDHE introduced several measures this session: requiring physicians, who were previously exempt, to report cancer diagnoses to the cancer registry; creating the Radiation Control Fee Fund; and changing the

state statute concerning critical access hospitals to allow them to achieve consistency with the new federal language.

The Governor has already signed into law the cancer registry bill and will sign a bill that creates the birth defects registry, which will be used to collect data that will assist in the identification, intervention and prevention of congenital anomalies, stillbirths and abnormal conditions of newborns. It appears that the directives of the Governor's ERO 32 will be implemented, which means that KDHE will keep all the restaurant inspection duties, while the remaining inspection duties will be moved to Department of Agriculture.

As we move toward the summer, West Nile Virus (WNV) season is quickly approaching. California has already confirmed the illness in two birds and this year's WNV season is expected to be a difficult one for parts of the West Coast. KDHE is already involved in public educational efforts including public meetings, as well as the development of public service announcements, literature, and media events. We hope the number of cases in Kansas drops off significantly this year as more of us get into the habit of protecting ourselves from mosquitos through the use of insect repellants with DEET, protective clothing, removal of standing water, and the repair of screens or other areas where mosquitos may enter.

New immunization requirements for school entry go into effect April 15 which will help to better protect our children from illness. All children entering kindergarten during the 2004-2005 school year must now have Hepatitis B and Varicella immunizations. KDHE is also working to improve all childhood immunization rates and has developed a Blue Ribbon Task Force to study the state's immunization rate and develop ways to ensure more children receive additional protection from illnesses.

Many KDHE staff members have been diligently working on the bankruptcy settlement agreement with Farmland Industries to ensure the necessary requirements are in place to assure that environmental remediation work will be completed and necessary environmental protections will be taken at Farmland facilities around the state. This has been a lengthy process, but the result is that facilities will remain open, continuing to provide many jobs to Kansans, while specific requirements guide their operations to ensure protection of the environment around the facilities.

Earth Day, April 22, is fast approaching and KDHE will be encouraging Kansans to seek ways to preserve our beautiful state including recycling efforts and the promotion of community projects that reduce the production of waste materials. This important day reminds us all of our responsibility to keep our surroundings clean and beautiful for our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

And speaking of children, KDHE employees are coming through with strong support for March of Dimes fund-raising efforts currently underway. March of Dimes works to prevent birth defects and will host WalkAmerica April 23. Support for our agency walkers is appreciated! Within the last six months the agency has pulled together to help several community efforts including raising \$1,298 for Junior Achievement (nearly twice as much as raised the year before), and donating \$13,483 for United Way, (also a significant increase over the previous year). Thank you for supporting our community!

Be Well,